

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6899
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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S E C R E T AMMAN 0693

STADIS //

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JO, EG, XF

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN-JORDANIAN RELATIONS

REF: CAIRO 1229

1. I WANT TO EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION FOR AMBASSADOR EILTS
EXCELLENT OVERVIEW OF JORDANIAN-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS
(REFTEL). THIS CABLE ADDS A FEW COMMENTS FROM THE
JORDANIAN PERSPECTIVE.

2. I FULLY AGREE THAT IT NOW WOULD BE A MISTAKE FOR US
TO GET IN BETWEEN SADAT AND HUSSEIN ON THE CURRENT TIFF.
WE CAN SIMILARLY ENCOURAGE HUSSEIN ON SADAT'S MODERATION,
AND KING SAYS HE ACCEPTS FACT THERE IS NO OTHER CHOICE
FOR EGYPT BUT SADAT. EARLIER SUGGESTIONS FROM HERE ON FACILITATING
EGYPT-JORDAN CONTACTS WERE PREDICATED ON A LESS ACRIMONIOUS
AND DEEP-SEATED RIFT AND WERE ACTIVATED BY THE THOUGHT THAT
RESUMED COMMUNICATIONS MIGHT HELP WORK OUT INSTEAD OF WORK UP
THE PROBLEMS BETWEEN JORDAN AND EGYPT.

3. THE SAUDIS SEEM UNLIKELY ALSO TO TAKE ON MUCH
RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS AFFAIR, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE
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UNDOUBTEDLY HEARD THE VIEWS OF BOTH SIDES.

4. WE HAVE ON OCCASION REMINDED THE KING OF HOW IMPORTANT HIS PAST STATEMENTS ON SINAI II HAVE BEEN IN SOURING HIS RELATIONSHIPS IN CAIRO. HE HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN STUNG BY THIS. THE SUBJECT HAS BEEN RETURNED TO SEVERAL TIMES BY HIM IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS. IN EACH CASE, HE HAS RATHER LAMELY REPORTED HE WAS BADLY QUOTED. THE LAST TIME HE SAID HE HAD SENT SADAT THE FULL RECORD OF HIS INTERVIEW ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOT MUCH HE CAN DO ABOUT TEXT OF SYRIA-JORDAN COMMUNIQUE LAST DECEMBER.

5. SOME TIME AGO WE REPORTED KING'S ANNOYANCE THAT EGYPT SEEMED TO BE REPLACING HIM AS A PRIVILEGED ARAB INTERLOCUTOR WITH THE US. THIS DROPPED FROM SIGHT ROUGHLY COINCIDENTALLY WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYRIAN-JORDANIAN RAPPROCHMENT. WE BELIEVE THIS WAS ONLY ONE OF A NUMBER OF REASONS (COVERED IN AMMAN 75 A-99 DATED SEPTEMBER 17) WHICH TENDED TO BRING JORDAN AND SYRIA CLOSER TOGETHER AND THUS UPSET SADAT.

6. AS A PRESSURE TACTIC TO BRING SYRIA AND JORDAN CLOSER
TO GOING TO GENEVA, PRESENT EGYPTIAN EFFORT
RISKS MASSIVE FAILURE. SIMILARLY, AS AN EFFORT TO
BRING ABOUT A WEST BANK DISENGAGEMENT IN ORDER TO KEEP
EGYPT COMPANY FOR THE FUTURE, THE CURRENT PRESSURIZED
APPROACH ALSO PROBABLY WILL NOT SUCCEED. IT SEEMS TO
LOSE SIGHT OF RABAT SUMMIT DECISIONS AND EGYPTIAN
REVERSAL OF JULY 1976 ALEXANDRIA COMMUNIQUE WITH
JORDANIANS WHICH LED UP TO RABAT. FINALLY, THERE IS
ALSO THE WORRYING FACT THAT AS EGYPT GETS TOUGHER IT
SHARPENS THE CONTRADICTION IN ITS EFFORTS (WHICH THE
CAIRO MESSAGE SO CLEARLY POINTS OUT) AND PUSHES JORDAN
CLOSER TO SYRIA. MORE EGYPTIAN PRESSURE IS GOING TO
STIFFEN THE "GLUE" THAT NOW BINDS THE SYRIAN-JORDANIAN
TIES, NOT WEAKEN IT. THE OTHER DANGER IS OF COURSE
THAT THE CLOSER SYRIA AND JORDAN MOVE TOGETHER, THE
MORE ATTRACTIVE TO JORDAN AND THE KING BECOMES THE
PRESENT FLIRTATION WITH THE SOVIETS OVER WEAPONS DEALS.

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7. IN RECENT DAYS WE HAVE SEEN SOME POSSIBLY FAVORABLE
CHANGES. THERE IS A REPORT THAT EGYPT WILL BACK
DOWN ON THE OSMAN NURI AMBASSADORSHIP WHICH HAS BEEN
CONFIRMED GO US BY THE KING. RIFAI ALSO SAYS THAT HE
AND THE KING WILL "LIE LOW". OUR INTERPRETATIONS OF
THIS POINT ARE THAT : (A) JORDAN WILL CONTINUE TO PUSH
THE SYRIANS TO AVOID PRECIPITATING A CONFLICT WITH THE
ISRAELIS, AND (B) QUITE POSSIBLY JORDAN WILL KEEP QUIET

IN PUBLIC ABOUT SINAI. BUT SINAI IN ANY EVENT SEEMS
TO HAVE DIED OUT AS A TOPIC OF COMMENT IN SYRIA
AND THEREFORE IS NOT LIKELY TO BE TOO STRONGLY FELT
IN AMMAN AS AN ISSUE ON WHICH FURTHER COMMENT IS DUE.
SADAT'S TONGUE LASHING OF RIFAI AND TALHUNI AND HIS
LETTER HAVE THUS HELPED ACHIEVE SOME OF HIS PURPOSES.

8. BUT THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD JORDAN WILL
DROP THE PACE OF ITS REGULAR CONTACTS WITH DAMASCUS.
RIFAI HAS BEEN TO DAMASCUS SINCE THE TWO EMISSARIES
RETURNED FROM CAIRO; TALHUNI AND ABDUL MUNIM HAVE ALSO
MADE THAT JOURNEY; AND SYRIAN PRIME MINISTER AYUBBI WILL
BE COMING HERE THIS WEEK FOR A REGULAR SESSION OF THE
PREMIER-LEVEL SYRIA-JORDAN JOINT COMMITTEE. THUS THERE
IS PROBABLY LITTLE CHANCE FOR THE "APPEARANCE" OF A
"GO SLOW" TO EMERGE. AS FOR THE SUBSTANCE, HERE TOO
(IN THE ABSENCE OF AN INITIATIVE ON THE NEXT STEPS FROM
THE US) WE EXPECT THAT JORDAN WILL CONTINUE WITH ASAD
IN THE PURSUIT OF ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO MAKE LIFE
MISERABLE FOR ISRAELIS AT THE UNSC IN MAY AND LATER AT
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. IT ALL ADDS UP TO A PRETTY COLD WINTER
WITH LITTLE CHANCE FOR A THAW IN PROSPECT.
PICKERING

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